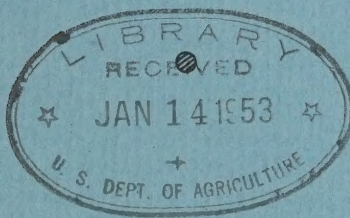


Reserve
1.941
R3H612

The Hired **FARM WORKING FORCE OF 1951**

**with Special Information on
Regular Workers in 1950**



**U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS**

Washington, D. C.

October 1952

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
LIBRARY



Summary.....	1
Numbers and farm work.....	3
Major activ.....	3
Time worked and wages earned by farm wage workers in 1951.....	4
Number of farm employers worked for by hired farm workers in 1951.....	5
Regular farm workers.....	5
Tables.....	8

Reserve
BOOK NUMBER

1.941
R3H612

836283

THE HIRED FARM WORKING FORCE OF 1951

With Special Information on Regular Workers in 1950

By Louis J. Ducoff and Eleanor M. Birch

SUMMARY

The estimated total number of persons who worked for farm wages 25 days or more in 1951 was 2,156,000 according to information obtained in an enumerative survey made in December 1951.^{1/} Information on the earnings of the workers as well as the number of employers worked for during the year was also obtained in this survey.

Farm wage workers who did less than 25 days of farm wage work were excluded from this study. These workers represent approximately a third of the hired farm working force, but they contribute only about 5 percent of the total man-days of hired labor input during the year. The information presented in this report pertains only to the remaining group, whose participation in hired farm work was substantial.

The 1951 total of 2,156,000 was 14 percent less than the 1949 total of 2,510,000^{2/} and was one of the lowest estimates for this group observed during the post-World War II period. There was no change since 1949 in the relative importance of males and females. Males accounted for 80 percent of the 1951 total, and females represented 20 percent.

In terms of days spent in farm wage work, a relatively large decline from the 1949 levels occurred in the middle ranges, that is, those who worked from 75 to 249 days. The group of farm wage workers who worked 250 days and more showed no significant decrease.

^{1/} The survey was made for the Bureau of Agricultural Economics by the Bureau of the Census. Information was obtained for persons 14 years old and over in the civilian noninstitutional population in December of 1951 who did farm work for cash wages during the year. Groups not covered in the survey included children under 14 years old, persons who entered the armed forces during the year, persons who died during the year, persons in institutions, and some of the domestic and foreign migratory workers.

^{2/} Comparable information for 1950 is not available.

All workers who reported 25 days or more of farm wage work in 1951 were classified according to the occupation or activity in which they had spent the most time during the year. These workers differed somewhat from those of 1947 and 1949 in regard to their chief activities. Sixty percent of them, or 1,292,000, reported farm work as their main pursuit in 1951, with about 1,000,000 of these reporting farm wage work as their chief activity. The remaining 40 percent of the 1951 farm wage workers were persons whose chief activity was nonfarm work or who spent the major part of the year in housekeeping, school, or other activities not directly connected with making a living. Between 1949 and 1951, the number of persons whose chief activity during the year was farm wage work decreased by more than a fifth.

The average cash wage income in 1951 for all persons who did 25 days or more of farm-wage work was \$879. This amount included \$683 from farm wages and \$196 from nonfarm wages. In both 1947 and 1949 the average cash wage income was in the neighborhood of \$700.

Detailed information as to the number of farm employers worked for during the year was obtained in the 1951 survey. This information was not available in any previous year. It gives an indication of labor turn-over and also shows the differences in employment patterns between migratory and nonmigratory workers. In 1951, 77 percent of the farm wage workers with 25 or more days of farm employment worked for only one farm employer during the year. For nonmigratory workers, this figure was 81 percent, while for migratory workers it was only 35 percent. Those who worked for 4 or more employers represented 23 percent of the migratory group, but only 5 percent of the nonmigratory.

In December 1950, some special information was obtained from regular hired farm workers. The information related to workers who had worked 6 months or more continuously on one farm during 1950. There were 774,000 of these workers, and 95 percent of them were males.

In general, these regular workers were older than the seasonal or the less regularly employed farm workers but younger than most nonagricultural workers. Almost three-fourths of these men lived on farms. About four-fifths of these workers were white and the remainder were chiefly Negroes.

Twenty-seven percent of the regular hired farm workers in 1950 had never married. The rest of the group had an average of 1.6 children under 18 years of age; 15 percent of these had 4 or more children.

Cash wages earned by the 774,000 workers on the one farm on which they worked for 6 months or more in 1950 averaged approximately \$1,200. Twenty-one percent of the workers earned less than \$600 and 14 percent earned \$2,000 or more.

Numbers and Composition of the 1951 Hired Farm Working Force

The total number of persons surveyed who did 25 days or more of farm wage work during 1951 was 2,156,000, a 14 percent decrease from the 1949 total of 2,510,000 (table 1). Comparable information for 1950 is not available. Males represented 80 percent of the 1951 total, and females, 20 percent - the same proportions as in 1949.

In terms of days spent in farm wage work, a relatively large decrease from 1949 occurred in the middle ranges, that is, those who worked from 75 to 249 days (table 2). The group of farm wage workers who worked 250 days and more experienced no significant decline. Defense employment available in 1951 probably exerted a stronger pull on seasonal and intermediate categories of hired farm workers than on regular, year-round workers who predominated in the 250 days and over group.

Forty-three percent of all workers were in the group who worked 25 to 74 days. Of those, 29 percent were males and 14 percent were females. However, females were proportionately more important in this group; 70 percent of all females fell within it. This concentration is normal, as housewives, for example, often join the farm labor force only for brief periods of peak seasonal farm activity during cultivation or harvest time.

Nearly all of the hired workers who worked as much as 250 days on farms were men. Female workers made up only 9 percent of the farm wage workers in the group working 150 to 249 days on farms, and 24 percent of those working 75 to 149 days group.

Major Activity of Farm Wage Workers During 1951

In 1951, of the 2,156,000 workers who did as much as 25 days of farm wage work in the year, about 1,000,000 reported farm wage work as their chief activity (table 3). Approximately 300,000 others were farm operators and members of their families who worked on other farms for wages even though their chief activity during the year was working on their own farms. An additional 250,000 were persons whose chief activity during the year was nonfarm work. These three groups made up 71 percent of the 1951 hired farm working force covered in this study.

The remaining 29 percent of the farm wage workers who did 25 days or more of farm wage work during 1951 reported that they were not in the labor force for the greater part of the year. These workers consisted of 267,000 housewives, 287,000 students, and 65,000 who were engaged mainly in other nongainful activities.

The impact of defense mobilization conditions on the size and composition of the 1951 hired farm working force is evident in the data in table 3. Workers whose chief activity in the year was working on farms for wages declined by about 280,000, or 22 percent under the 1949 number. On the other hand, the numbers of those workers, mostly the short-term seasonal workers, for whom farm wage work is supplementary to other activities, remained substantially the same as in 1949. As a result, housewives and school youths figured more prominently in the hired farm working force in 1951 than in 1949.

As the number of year-round hired farm workers declined very little between 1949 and 1951, the decrease in the number of workers whose chief activity was farm wage work reflects mainly the loss of workers who were available for employment during most or all of the year, but who tended to obtain much less than a full year's work in agriculture. Regular, full-time employment in defense or other jobs was in their case a strong motivating factor. Inductions and enlistments in the armed forces as well as increased mechanization of certain farming operations are additional factors in the decrease in numbers of these workers between 1949 and 1951.

Among farm wage workers who do both farm and nonfarm work in the course of the year, those whose nonfarm work was a minor activity declined somewhat from 1949. For those whose nonfarm work was their chief activity and farm work a minor activity, their numbers remained practically the same as in 1949 and 1947. It is probable that a good deal of occupational shifting occurred between 1949 and 1951 among workers who held both farm and nonfarm jobs in the same year. Many of those whose farm work in 1949 was supplementary to their primary nonfarm jobs ceased to do farm work by 1951. But the greater availability of nonfarm jobs in 1951 enabled other farm wage workers to do considerably more nonfarm work in 1951 than they did in 1949. The result was that these workers nearly offset the gross losses from agriculture of those farm wage workers whose chief activity was nonfarm work.

Time Worked and Wages Earned by Farm Wage Workers in 1951

The average number of days worked by farm wage workers at farm and nonfarm work combined increased from 166 in 1949 to 174 in 1951 (table 4). The average amount of employment in farm work rose slightly from 140 days in 1949 to 146 days in 1951. The average number of days spent in nonfarm work did not change significantly from 1949, although some increase occurred in nonfarm work for males alone.

For the 2,156,000 workers surveyed, total cash wage earnings for 1951 averaged \$879 (tables 4 and 5). Of this 78 percent was earned in farm work and 22 percent in nonfarm work. These earnings were from an average of 174 days of work, which is about 7 months' employment. The presence of many short-term, seasonal workers affects this average. If only those workers who worked 250 days and more are considered, the average number of days worked is 325 and the average yearly cash earnings are \$1,614 (table 5). Noncash allowances in the form of housing, meals, farm products, and other perquisites, furnished without charge to most of these year-round, regular hired hands, are not included in these wage figures.

The average number of days spent in farm work increased slightly from 1949 to 1951. However, total farm wage earnings increased 23 percent. This was due mainly to an increase in average daily earnings from farm wage work from \$4.00 in 1949 to \$4.70 in 1951. This wage improvement was partly offset by the 10-percent increase in farmers' living costs during the same period.^{3/}

^{3/} Index Numbers of Prices Paid by Farmers, United States, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

Those workers whose chief activity in 1951 was farm wage work earned an average of \$1,230 from 249 days of work (table 6). This consisted of 236 days of farm wage work and 13 days of nonfarm work. The 1951 earnings from farm wage work of these workers averaged 38 percent more than in 1949. In that year these workers averaged 211 days of farm wage work and 14 days of nonfarm wage work. Thus about two-thirds of the increase in annual farm wage earnings of those workers in 1951 over 1949 was due to higher farm wage rates and about a third was due to longer employment on farms.

Number of Farm Employers Worked for by Hired Farm Workers in 1951

More than three-fourths of the workers who did as much as 25 days of farm wage work in 1951 worked for only one farm employer during the year (tables 7 and 8). An additional 12 percent worked for two farm employers. Approximately 1 in 9 workers had three or more employers during 1951.

The distribution of male workers whose chief activity was farm wage work did not differ significantly from that of all males - 76 percent worked for one farm employer and 15 percent worked for two (table 9).

The migratory worker's pattern of working for a number of employers during a year is apparent in table 9. Only 35 percent of the migratory workers surveyed worked for one farm employer during 1951, compared to 81 percent for nonmigratory workers. Those who worked for four or more farm employers represented 23 percent of the migratory group, but only 5 percent of the nonmigratory (table 8).

The association of nonmigratory workers and few employers is seen by the fact that 91 percent of them fall into the first two classes - one and two employers. However, only 72 percent of the migratory workers are in these classes.

Regular Farm Workers - 1950

In December 1950, detailed information was obtained for workers employed continuously on one farm for 6 months or more. There were 774,000 such workers in 1950 (table 10).^{4/} This group includes year-round and other regular farm workers, as contrasted with seasonal or short-term workers in agriculture. The group surveyed includes most of the farm workers who would have been eligible for coverage by Old Age and Survivors Insurance, had the 1950 Amendment to the Social Security Act been in effect in that year.^{5/}

^{4/} The survey obtained detailed information for persons 14 years old and over in the civilian noninstitutional population in December 1950, who worked for 6 months or more continuously on one farm. Groups not covered in the survey included children under 14 years old, persons who entered the armed forces during the year, persons who died during the year, persons in institutions, and some domestic and foreign migratory workers.

^{5/} Coverage of regular hired workers under the Amendment did not go into effect until January 1951.

As might be expected, almost all of the 774,000 workers surveyed were males (table 10). Year-round, regular, hired farm workers are usually men. Nearly 15 percent of these were veterans of World War II.

Farm wage workers employed continuously on one farm for 6 months or more in 1950 had a higher age composition than shorter-term, seasonal workers. Seventy-four percent of these workers were 26 years of age or more (table 11). On the average, they were slightly younger than those nonagricultural workers who were covered by Old Age and Survivors Insurance in 1950.

So far as residence is concerned, regularly employed hired farm workers often live on the farms on which they work. Almost three-fourths of the regular hired workers surveyed lived on farms, with 20 percent living in rural-nonfarm areas and 7 percent in urban areas (table 12).

Approximately 83 percent of these regular hired farm workers were white (table 13). The racial composition varies regionally. Negroes, who comprise 16 percent of the total, are located almost wholly in the South. Other nonwhites are insignificant in the total picture.

Twenty-seven percent of the regular hired farm workers in 1950 had never married and 10 percent were widowed, divorced, or separated. Almost two-thirds were married (table 14). Of those who were married or had previously been married, 60 percent had children under 18 years of age, and 15 percent had 4 or more (table 15). The average number of children for this group was 1.6. The information on marital status and number of children under 18 is relevant to the coverage of these workers under the Old Age and Survivors Insurance program. In case of death or retirement of insured workers, benefits are paid for children under 18 years of age as well as for wives or widows.

Wages earned by the 774,000 workers on the one farm on which they worked for 6 months or more in 1950 averaged \$1,163 (table 16). Male veterans earned the highest wages, \$1,533. The 25 to 44 age group of nonveterans also earned wages above the average, with \$1,357; all other age groups earned less than the average of \$1,163.

These wages do not include the value of housing, food, farm products, and other perquisites which are usually furnished these workers. In a study made in 1945, the average value of perquisites furnished regular hired workers was equal to about 30 percent of their cash wages.^{6/} If a 30-percent allowance for the value of perquisites furnished without charge by farm operators is made, the average earnings of the 774,000 workers would be raised from \$1,163 to about \$1,512.

^{6/} See Report No. 18 in the Series, Survey of Wages and Wage rates in Agriculture, United States Bureau of Agricultural Economics, 1946, page 9.

Because of the similarity between the workers included in this survey and those farm workers now eligible for coverage under Old Age and Survivors Insurance, special interest attaches to the earnings of this group. If a worker worked continuously for one farm operator throughout a year, following a qualifying quarter of continuous employment, and if he earned the average cash wages indicated in this study, the average annual Social Security tax per worker of 1-1/2 percent which the farm employer would have to pay would be about \$18.00 and a similar sum would be deducted from the worker's wages.

Distribution of the workers by cash wages earned reveals that about one-fifth of them received wages below \$600 (table 17). Thirty-three percent earned between \$600 and \$1,200 and 46 percent received wages above \$1,200. This is the distribution for the country as a whole; the picture would vary regionally.

Table 1.- Farm wage workers with 25 or more days of farm wage work in the year, by sex, United States, 1945 - 1949 and 1951 ^{1/}

Sex	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1951
	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands
Total	1,965	1,953	2,215	2,502	2,510	2,156
Male	1,576	1,584	1,864	2,036	2,001	1,718
Female	389	369	351	466	509	438

^{1/} Data relate to persons 14 years of age and over in the civilian noninstitutional population at or near the end of the year.

Table 2.- Distribution of farm wage workers with 25 or more days of farm wage work¹ in the year, by length of farm wage work during year, United States, 1945-1949 and 1951

Days of farm wage work	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1951
	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands
Total	1,965	1,953	2,215	2,502	2,510	2,156
25 - 74	825	749	771	904	1,017	925
75 - 149	339	340	411	597	526	379
150 - 249	262	312	418	381	396	301
250 and over	539	552	615	620	571	551

Percentage of total					
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Total	100	100	100	100	100
25 - 74	42	38	35	36	43
75 - 149	17	18	18	24	21
150 - 249	13	16	19	15	14
250 and over	23	28	28	25	25

¹/ See footnote to Table 1.

Table 3.- Distribution of farm wage workers with 25 days and over of farm wage work by chief activity during year, United States, 1947, 1949 and 1951

Chief activity of workers during year	Farm wage workers			Percentage of farm wage workers		
	1947	1949	1951	1947	1949	1951
	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Percent	Percent	Percent
All activities	2,215	2,510	2,156	100	100	100
Farm work	1,563	1,622	1,292	71	65	60
Farm wage work	1,325	1,262	981	60	50	46
Without nonfarm work	1,014	987	768	46	39	36
With nonfarm work	311	234	213	14	11	10
Other farm work	238	360	311	11	15	14
Nonfarm work	245	252	245	11	10	11
Not in the labor force ¹	407	636	619	18	25	29
Keeping house	128	299	267	5	12	13
Attending school	195	258	287	9	10	13
Other	84	79	65	4	3	3

¹ Includes for 1951, 8,000 persons who reported looking for work was their chief activity. The comparable figures for 1947 and 1949 not available.

See footnote to Table 1.

Table 4.- Average time worked and wages earned during year at farm and nonfarm wage work by farm workers with 25 days or more of farm wage work, by sex, United States, 1947, 1949, and 1951

Year and sex	Total days worked	Total wages earned	Farm wage work		Nonfarm wage work	
			Number	Dollars	Number	Dollars
<u>1947</u>						
Total	183	734	156	596	27	138
Male	198	803	170	648	28	155
Female	106	362	85	319	21	43
<u>1949</u>						
Total	156	702	140	557	26	145
Male	183	810	157	643	26	167
Female	98	280	74	219	24	61
<u>1951</u>						
Total	174	879	146	683	28	196
Male	197	1,035	165	797	32	238
Female	84	268	70	238	14	30

See footnote to Table 1.

Table 5.- Average time worked and wages earned at farm and nonfarm work for farm wage workers with 25 days or more of farm wage work, by sex and duration of farm wage work, United States, 1951^{1/}

Sex and duration of farm wage work	Number of farm wage workers	Wage work									
		Total					Farm				
		Aver- age days of work	Cash earned		Aver- age days of work	Cash earned		Aver- age days of work	Cash earned		Nonfarm Cash earned
			1951	Per day worked		1951	Per day worked		1951	Per day worked	
	Thousands	Number	Dollars	Dollars	Number	Dollars	Dollars	Number	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars
All farm wage workers	2,156	174	879	5.05	146	683	4.70	28	196	7.00	
25 - 150 days	1,304	100	534	5.35	60	262	4.35	40	272	6.85	
150 - 249	301	216	1,027	4.75	197	886	4.50	19	141	7.45	
250 and over	551	325	1,614	4.95	320	1,569	4.90	5	45	8.60 ^{1/2}	
Male	1,718	197	1,035	5.25	165	797	4.85	32	238	7.55	
25 - 150 days	907	114	675	5.95	63	297	4.70	51	378	7.50	
150 - 249	274	216	1,051	4.85	196	898	4.60	20	153	7.55	
250 and over	537	326	1,635	5.00	321	1,589	4.95	5	46	8.60	
Female	438	84	268	3.15	70	238	3.40	14	30	2.10	

^{1/} See footnote to Table 1.

Table 6.- Average time worked and wages earned in farm and nonfarm work in 1951 and 1949 for workers whose chief activity during the year was farm wage work, United States

Year	Total	Total	Farm wage work		Nonfarm wage work	
	days	wages	Days	Wages	Days	Wages
	worked	earned	worked	earned	worked	earned
	:	:	:	:	:	:
1951	249	1,230	236	1,142	13	88
1949	225	925	211	824	14	101

Table 7.- Distribution of farm wage workers (with 25 days or more of farm wage work) by number of farm employers worked for during the year, by sex, United States, 1951

Number of employers worked for during 1951	All workers	Male	Female
	:	:	:
	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands
Total	2,156	1,718	438
1 employer	1,649	1,343	306
2 employers	271	215	56
3 employers	95	54	41
4 - 6 employers	79	56	23
7 or more employers	62	50	12

See footnote to Table 1.

Table 8.- Percentage distribution of farm wage workers (with 25 days or more of farm wage work) by number of farm employers worked for during the year, by migratory status of worker, United States, 1951

Number of employers worked for during 1951	All workers	Migratory workers	Nonmigratory workers
	Percent	Percent	Percent
Total	100	100	100
1 employer	77	35	81
2 employers	12	37	10
3 employers	4	5	4
4 - 6 employers	4	22	2
7 or more employers	3	1	3

See footnote to Table 1.

Table 9.- Percentage distribution of male workers ^{1/} whose chief activity during year was farm wage work by number of farm employers worked for during the year, United States, 1951

	Percent
Total	100
1 employer	76
2 employers	15
3 employers	4
4 - 6 employers	3
7 or more employers	2

^{1/} Includes only workers who did 25 or more days of farm wage work during 1951.

See footnote to Table 1.

Table 10.- Distribution of farm-wage workers employed 6 months or more continuously on one farm during 1950 by sex and veteran status, United States

Sex and veteran status	Workers	Percentage of total
	Thousands	Percent
All farm-wage workers	774	100
Male	738	95
Veterans (World War II)	113	14
Nonveterans	625	81
Female	36	5

See footnote to Table 1.

Table 11.- Distribution of male farm-wage workers^{1/2/} employed 6 months or more continuously on one farm during 1950, by age, United States

Age	Workers	Percentage of Total
	Thousands	Percent
All male farm-wage workers	713	100
14 - 17 years	19	2
18 - 25 "	169	24
26 - 34 "	126	18
35 - 44 "	183	26
45 and over	216	30

^{1/}Nonmigratory workers only; 25,000 migratory workers of both sexes are excluded, as detailed information is not available for these workers.

^{2/}See footnote to Table 1.

Table 12.- Distribution of farm-wage workers^{1/}
employed 6 months or more continu-
ously on one farm during 1950, by
residence, in December 1950, United
States

Residence	Workers	Percentage
	Thousands	Percent
All farm-wage workers	749	100
Rural-farm	550	73
Rural nonfarm	147	20
Urban	52	7

^{1/} See footnotes to Tables 1 and 11.

Table 13.--Distribution of farm-wage workers^{1/}
employed 6 months or more continu-
ously on one farm during 1950, by
race, United States

Race	Workers	Percentage
	Thousands	Percent
All farm-wage workers	749	100
White	622	83
Nonwhite	127	17
Negro	123	16
Other	4	1

^{1/} See footnotes to tables 1 and 11

Table 14.- Distribution of male farm-wage workers employed 6 months or more continuously on one farm during 1950, by marital status, United States

Marital status	Workers	Percentage of total
	Thousands	Percent
All male farm-wage workers	738	100
Never married	199	27
Married	466	63
Widowed, divorced, or separated	73	10

See footnote to Table 1.

Table 15.- Distribution of male married or previously married farm-wage workers employed 6 months or more on one farm during 1950, by number of children under 18 years of age, United States

Number of children under 18 years	Workers	Percentage of total
	Thousands	Percent
All	538	100
With no children	213	40
With 1 child	103	19
With 2 children	73	14
With 3 children	67	12
With 4 or more children	82	15

See footnote to Table 1.

Table 16.- Average cash wages earned by farm-wage workers employed 6 months or more continuously on one farm during 1950, by sex, by veteran status for males, and by age for nonveteran males, United States

Sex, veteran status and age	Workers	Average wages earned on farm
	Thousands	Dollars
All farm-wage workers	774	1,163
Male	738	1,194
Nonveterans	625	1,133
14 - 17 years	19	670
18 - 24 "	146	863
25 - 44 "	244	1,357
45 and over	216	1,104
Veterans	113	1,533
Female	36	511

See footnote to Table 1.

Table 17.- Distribution of farm-wage workers employed 6 months or more continuously on one farm during 1950 by amount of cash wages earned, United States

Amount of cash wages earned	Workers	Percentage of total
	Thousands	Percent
All farm-wage workers	774	100
Under 300 dollars	52	7
300 - 599	111	14
600 - 799	107	14
800 - 999	89	11
1,000 - 1,199	64	8
1,200 - 1,499	130	17
1,500 - 1,999	117	15
2,000 - 2,399	68	9
2,400 and over	36	5

See footnote to Table 1.

